



## Proper Use of Modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS & XU



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### What's Changed?

Note: No substantive content updates.

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The [Medicare National Correct Coding Initiative \(NCCI\)](#) includes Procedure-to-Procedure (PTP) edits that explain when you shouldn't report certain HCPCS or CPT codes together in all or most billing situations. For NCCI PTP edits with:

- A Correct Coding Modifier Indicator (CCMI) of "0," don't report the codes together by the same provider for the same patient on the same date of service (DOS). If you report the codes together on the same DOS, the Column 1 code is eligible for payment and Medicare denies the Column 2 code.
- A CCMI of "1," report the codes together only in limited circumstances by using NCCI PTP-associated modifiers.

Refer to the [Medicare NCCI Policy Manual, Chapter 1](#) for general information about the NCCI program, NCCI PTP edits, CCIMs, and NCCI PTP-associated modifiers. One purpose of NCCI PTP edits is to prevent payment for codes that report overlapping services except where the services are "separate and distinct."

Modifier 59 is an important NCCI PTP-associated modifier that physicians and providers often use incorrectly. For the NCCI program, its primary purpose is to show that a provider performed 2 or more procedures at different anatomic sites or patient encounters. Use modifier 59 only when no other modifier better describes the relationship between the procedure codes.

## Definition of Modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, XU

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The CPT Professional Codebook defines modifier 59 as:

**Distinct Procedural Service:** Under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to indicate that a procedure or service was distinct or independent from other non-E/M services performed on the same day. Modifier 59 is used to identify procedures/services, other than E/M services, that are not normally reported together, but are appropriate under the circumstances. Documentation must support a different session, different procedure or surgery, different site or organ system, separate incision/excision, separate lesion, or separate injury (or area of injury in extensive injuries) not ordinarily encountered or performed on the same day by the same individual.

However, when another already established modifier is appropriate it should be used rather than modifier 59. Only if no more descriptive modifier is available, and the use of modifier 59 best explains the circumstances, should modifier 59 be used.

**Note:** Modifier 59 should not be appended to an E/M service. To report a separate and distinct E/M service with a non-E/M service performed on the same date, see modifier 25.

Don't use modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, XU, and other NCCI PTP-associated modifiers to bypass an NCCI PTP edit unless the proper criteria for use of the modifiers are met. Medical documentation must support the use of the modifier.

Modifiers XE, XP, XS, and XU are valid modifiers. These modifiers give greater reporting specificity in situations where you used modifier 59 previously. Use these modifiers instead of modifier 59 whenever possible. Only use modifier 59 if no other more specific modifier is appropriate.

We allow modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU on Column 1 or Column 2 codes (review the related transmittal at [Change Request 11168](#)).

We define these modifiers as follows:

- XE—"Separate encounter, a service that is distinct because it occurred during a separate encounter." Only use XE to describe separate encounters on the same DOS.
- XP—"Separate practitioner, a service that is distinct because it was performed by a different practitioner."
- XS—"Separate structure, a service that is distinct because it was performed on a separate organ/structure."
- XU—"Unusual non-overlapping service, the use of a service that is distinct because it does not overlap usual components of the main service."

## Appropriate & Inappropriate Use of These Modifiers

**Use modifier 59 or XS for different anatomic sites during the same encounter only when procedures that aren't ordinarily performed or encountered on the same day are performed on:**

- Different organs
- Different anatomic regions
- In limited situations on different, non-contiguous lesions in different anatomic regions of the same organ

Modifiers 59 and XS are for surgical procedures, non-surgical therapeutic procedures, or diagnostic procedures that:

- Are performed at different anatomic sites.
- Aren't ordinarily performed or encountered on the same day.
- Can't be described by 1 of the more specific anatomic NCCI PTP-associated modifiers—in other words, RT, LT, E1–E4, FA, F1–F9, TA, T1–T9, LC, LD, RC, LM, or RI. Review Examples [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), and [6](#).

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From an NCCI program perspective, the definition of different anatomic sites includes different organs or, in certain instances, different lesions in the same organ. We created NCCI edits to prevent providers from inappropriate billing of lesions and sites not considered separate and distinct. Treatment of contiguous structures in the same organ or anatomic region doesn't generally constitute treatment of different anatomic sites. For example:

- Treating the nail, nail bed, and adjacent soft tissue distal to and including the skin overlying the distal interphalangeal joint on the same toe or finger constitutes treatment of a single anatomic site. Review [Example 4](#).
- Treatment of posterior segment structures in the ipsilateral eye constitutes treatment of a single anatomic site. Review [Example 5](#).

**Only use modifier 59 or XE if no other modifier more appropriately describes the relationship of the 2 procedure codes.**

Another common use of modifier 59 or XE is for surgical procedures, non-surgical therapeutic procedures, or diagnostic procedures performed during different patient encounters on the same day that can't be described by 1 of the more specific NCCI PTP-associated modifiers—in other words, 24, 25, 27, 57, 58, 78, 79, or 91. Review [Example 7](#).

**Don't use modifier 59 or XU just because the code descriptors of the 2 codes are different.**

One of the common misuses of modifier 59 relates to the part of the definition of modifier 59 allowing its use to describe a "different procedure or surgery." The code descriptors of the 2 codes of a code pair edit describe different procedures even though they may overlap. Don't report the 2 codes together if they're performed at the same anatomic site and same patient encounter because they aren't considered "separate and distinct." Don't use modifier 59 or XU to bypass a PTP edit based on the 2 codes being "different procedures." Review [Example 8](#).

If you perform 2 procedures at separate anatomic sites or at separate patient encounters on the same DOS, you may use modifiers 59, XE, or XS to show that they're different procedures on that DOS. Also, there may be limited circumstances sometimes identified in the [Medicare NCCI Policy Manual](#) when you may report the 2 codes of an edit pair together with modifiers 59, XE, or XS when performed at the same patient encounter or at the same anatomic site.

### Only use modifiers 59, XE, or XU in these other specific situations.

There are 3 other limited situations where you may report 2 services as separate and distinct because they're separated in time and describe non-overlapping services even though they may occur during the same encounter.

- **Using modifier 59 or XE properly for 2 services described by timed codes provided during the same encounter only when they're performed 1 after another.** There's an appropriate use for modifier 59 that applies only to codes for which the unit of service is a measure of time (2 examples are: per 15 minutes or per hour). If you provide 2 timed services in separate and distinct time periods that aren't mingled with each other (in other words, you complete 1 service before the next service begins), you may use modifier 59 or XE to identify the services. Review [Example 9](#).
- **Using modifier 59 or XU properly for a diagnostic procedure that's performed before a therapeutic procedure only when the diagnostic procedure is the basis for performing the therapeutic procedure.** When you perform a diagnostic procedure before a surgical procedure or non-surgical therapeutic procedure and it's the basis on which you decide to perform the surgical procedure or non-surgical therapeutic procedure, you may consider that diagnostic procedure to be a separate and distinct procedure if it:
  - Occurs before the therapeutic procedure and isn't mingled with services the therapeutic intervention requires
  - Clearly provides the information needed to decide whether to proceed with the therapeutic procedure
  - Doesn't constitute a service that you would've otherwise required during the therapeutic intervention

If the diagnostic procedure is an inherent component of the surgical procedure, don't report it separately.

- **Using modifier 59 or XU properly for a diagnostic procedure that occurs after a completed therapeutic procedure only when the diagnostic procedure isn't a common, an expected, or a necessary follow-up to the therapeutic procedure.** When a diagnostic procedure follows the surgical procedure or non-surgical therapeutic procedure, you may consider that diagnostic procedure to be a separate and distinct procedure if it:
  - Occurs after the completion of the therapeutic procedure and isn't mingled with or otherwise mixed with services that the therapeutic intervention requires.
  - Doesn't constitute an otherwise required service during the therapeutic intervention. If the post-procedure diagnostic procedure is an inherent component or otherwise included (or not separately payable) post-procedure service of the surgical procedure or non-surgical therapeutic procedure, don't report it separately.

You don't need a different diagnosis for each HCPCS- or CPT-coded procedure to use modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU. On the other hand, different diagnoses aren't adequate criteria for using modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU. The codes stay bundled unless you perform the procedures at different anatomic sites, during separate patient encounters, or in 1 of the other 3 scenarios described previously.

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## Rural Health Clinics & Federally Qualified Health Centers

A single Rural Health Clinic (RHC) or Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) visit constitutes more than 1 RHC or FQHC practitioner encounter on the same day or multiple encounters with the same RHC or FQHC practitioner on the same day. It's payable as 1 visit, and this policy applies regardless of:

- The length or complexity of the visit
- The number or type of practitioners seen
- If the second visit is scheduled or unscheduled
- If the first visit is related or unrelated to the subsequent visit

An exception to this policy is when the patient, after the first visit, suffers an illness or injury that requires additional diagnosis or treatment on the same day (for example, a patient sees their practitioner in the morning for a medical condition and later in the day has a fall and returns to the RHC or FQHC). In this situation only, the FQHC would use modifier 59 on the claim, while the RHC would use modifier 59 or 25, to show the treatment qualifies for 2 billable visits.

The only other exceptions are:

- The patient has a medical visit and a mental health visit on the same day (2 billable visits)
- For RHCs only, the patient has an initial preventive physical exam (IPPE) and a separate medical, mental health visit, or both on the same day as the IPPE (2 or 3 billable visits)

## Examples of Appropriate & Inappropriate Use

### Example 1:

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 11102 – Tangential biopsy of skin (eg, shave, scoop, saucerize, curette); single lesion	CPT Code 17000 – Destruction (eg, laser surgery, electrosurgery, cryosurgery, chemosurgery, surgical curettement), premalignant lesions (eg, actinic keratoses); first lesion

You may report modifier 59 or XS with either the Column 1 or Column 2 code if you did the procedures at different anatomic sites on the same side of the body and a specific anatomic modifier isn't applicable. If you did the procedures on different sides of the body, use modifiers RT and LT or another pair of anatomic modifiers. Don't use modifier 59 or XS.

Using modifier 59 or XS is appropriate for different anatomic sites during the same encounter only when you perform procedures (that you don't ordinarily perform or encounter on the same day) on different organs or different anatomic regions or, in limited situations, on different, non-contiguous lesions in different anatomic regions of the same organ.

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**Example 2:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 47370 – Laparoscopy, surgical, ablation of 1 or more liver tumor(s); radiofrequency	CPT Code 76942 – Ultrasonic guidance for needle placement (eg, biopsy, aspiration, injection, localization device), imaging supervision and interpretation

Don't report CPT code 76942 with or without modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if the ultrasonic guidance is for needle placement for the laparoscopic liver tumor ablation procedure 47370. Only report 76942 with modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if the ultrasonic guidance for needle placement is unrelated to the laparoscopic liver tumor ablation.

**Example 3:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 93453 – Combined right and left heart catheterization including intraprocedural injection(s) for left ventriculography, imaging supervision and interpretation, when performed	CPT Code 76000 – Fluoroscopy (separate procedure), up to 1 hour physician or other qualified health care professional time

Don't report CPT code 76000 with or without modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU for a fluoroscopy in conjunction with a cardiac catheterization procedure. You may report 76000 with modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if you perform the fluoroscopy for a procedure unrelated to the cardiac catheterization procedure.

**Example 4:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 11055 – Paring or cutting of benign hyperkeratotic lesion (eg, corn or callus); single lesion	CPT Code 11720 – Debridement of nail(s) by any method(s); 1 to 5

Don't report CPT codes 11055 and 11720 together for services you perform on skin distal to and including the skin overlying the distal interphalangeal joint of the same toe. Don't use modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if you debride a nail on the same toe on which you pare a hyperkeratotic lesion of the skin on or distal to the distal interphalangeal joint. You may report modifier 59 or XS with code 11720 if you debride 1–5 nails and you pare a hyperkeratotic lesion on a toe other than 1 with a debrided toenail or the hyperkeratotic lesion is proximal to the skin overlying the distal interphalangeal joint of a toe on which you debride a nail.

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**Example 5:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 67210 – Destruction of localized lesion of retina (eg, macular edema, tumors), 1 or more sessions; photocoagulation	CPT Code 67220 – Destruction of localized lesion of choroid (eg, choroidal neovascularization); photocoagulation (eg, laser), 1 or more sessions

Don't report CPT code 67220 with or without modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if you perform both procedures during the same operative session because the retina and choroid are contiguous structures of the same organ.

**Example 6:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 29827 – Arthroscopy, shoulder, surgical; with rotator cuff repair	CPT Code 29820 – Arthroscopy, shoulder, surgical; synovectomy, partial

Don't report CPT code 29820 with or without modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU if you perform both procedures on the same shoulder during the same operative session. If you perform the procedures on different shoulders, use modifiers RT and LT, not modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU.

**Example 7:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 93015 – Cardiovascular stress test using maximal or submaximal treadmill or bicycle exercise, continuous electrocardiographic monitoring, and/or pharmacological stress; with supervision, interpretation and report	CPT Code 93040 – Rhythm ECG, 1-3 leads; with interpretation and report

You may report modifier 59 or XE if you interpret and report the rhythm electrocardiogram (ECG) at a different encounter than the cardiovascular stress test. If you interpret and report a rhythm ECG during the cardiovascular stress test encounter, don't report 93040 with or without modifier 59. You may report modifier 59 or XE when you interpret and report the procedures in different encounters on the same day.

**Example 8:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 34833 – Open iliac artery exposure with creation of conduit for delivery of endovascular prosthesis or for establishment of cardiopulmonary bypass, by abdominal or retroperitoneal incision, unilateral (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)	CPT Code 34820 – Open iliac artery exposure for delivery of endovascular prosthesis or iliac occlusion during endovascular therapy, by abdominal or retroperitoneal incision, unilateral (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

The CPT Professional Codebook instruction for CPT code 34833 states, “(Do not report 34833 in conjunction with 33364, 33953, 33954, 33959, 33962, 33969, 33984, 34820 when performed on the same side).” Although the CPT code descriptors for 34833 and 34820 describe different procedures, don’t report them together for the same side. Don’t add modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU to either code to report 2 procedures for the same side of the body. If you performed 2 procedures on different sides of the body, you may report them with modifiers LT and RT as appropriate. However, modifiers 59, XE, XP, XS, or XU are inappropriate if the basis for their use is that the narrative description of the 2 codes is different.

**Example 9:**

Column 1	Column 2
CPT Code 97140 – Manual therapy techniques (eg, mobilization/manipulation, manual lymphatic drainage, manual traction), 1 or more regions, each 15 minutes	CPT Code 97750 – Physical performance test or measurement (eg, musculoskeletal, functional capacity), with written report, each 15 minutes

You may report modifier 59 if you perform 2 procedures in distinctly different 15-minute time blocks. For example, you may report modifier 59 if you perform 1 service during the initial 15 minutes of therapy and you perform the other service during the second 15 minutes of therapy. As another example, you may report modifier 59 if you split the therapy time blocks by performing manual therapy for 10 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of physical performance test, followed by another 5 minutes of manual therapy. Don’t report CPT code 97750 with modifier 59 if you perform 2 procedures during the same time block. You may report modifier 59 when you perform 2 timed procedures in 2 different blocks of time on the same day.

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## Resources

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- [Medicare Benefit Policy Manual, Chapter 13](#), section 40.3
- [Medicare Claims Processing Manual, Chapter 23](#), section 20.9



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